

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 4738

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 30, 2022

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and  
Administration

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## AN ACT

To direct the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to establish a history project to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials, written materials, and photographs of those who were affected by COVID–19, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “COVID–19 American  
5 History Project Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

7       (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

8              (1) COVID–19 is a highly infectious respiratory  
9              illness caused by a virus called SARS–CoV–2. This  
10             disease has caused a worldwide pandemic affecting  
11             millions of people and has fundamentally altered the  
12             operations of the world’s cities, businesses, and  
13             schools.

14              (2) The outbreak of COVID–19 was first de-  
15             tected in Wuhan, China, and on January 21, 2020,  
16             the first confirmed case of COVID–19 was diag-  
17             nosed in the United States.

18              (3) The World Health Organization (WHO) de-  
19             clared COVID–19 a global pandemic on March 11,  
20             2020, and the President of the United States issued  
21             a national emergency declaration concerning the  
22             pandemic on March 13, 2020.

23              (4) To date, 194 million individuals have tested  
24             positive for COVID–19. Of those, 35 million are  
25             Americans; that is, more than one of every 10 Amer-

1       icans. Almost 4.2 million people have died from  
2       COVID–19 globally, and over 610,000 deaths have  
3       occurred in the United States.

4               (5) The first American received the COVID–19  
5       vaccine on December 14, 2020. Since then, 163 mil-  
6       lion Americans have been vaccinated and 188.5 mil-  
7       lion have received at least one dose. The vaccine be-  
8       came available to every American adult 18 and older  
9       on April 19, 2021.

10              (6) While there are still remaining cases, and  
11       healthcare professionals and researchers are tire-  
12       lessly working to eradicate the disease, it is impor-  
13       tant we begin work to fully capture the firsthand  
14       personal stories of those impacted by COVID–19, a  
15       major national event in the history of this country.

16              (7) Oral histories are of immeasurable value to  
17       historians, researchers, authors, journalists, film  
18       makers, scholars, students, and citizens of all walks  
19       of life. Survivors of the pandemic, survivors of loved  
20       ones who lost their lives to COVID–19, and frontline  
21       healthcare workers should be remembered and can  
22       provide valuable firsthand knowledge on how this  
23       pandemic impacted their everyday lives.

24              (8) It is in the Nation’s best interest to collect  
25       and catalog oral histories of Americans who were af-

1       fected by the pandemic so that future generations  
2       will have original sources of information regarding  
3       the lives and times of those who lived through or  
4       died from the COVID–19 pandemic and conditions  
5       under which they endured. These accounts will allow  
6       an opportunity for Americans to remember those  
7       who lost their lives and may learn firsthand of the  
8       heroics, loneliness, horrors, and triumphs of the  
9       healthcare workers who combated this pandemic.

10                     (9) The Library of Congress, as the Nation’s<sup>1</sup>  
11       oldest Federal cultural institution and largest and  
12       most inclusive library in human history, is an appropriate  
13       repository to collect, preserve, and make available  
14       to the public an archive of these oral histories.  
15       The Library’s American Folklife Center has expertise  
16       in the management of documentation projects  
17       and experience in the development of cultural and  
18       educational projects for the public.

19                     (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to create  
20       a new federally sponsored, authorized, and funded project  
21       that will coordinate at a national level the collection of  
22       video and audio recordings of personal histories and  
23       testimonials, written materials, and photographs of Americans  
24       who contracted COVID–19, individuals who lost family  
25       members and friends to COVID–19, and healthcare

1 workers who fought to treat the illness. These stories will  
2 inform, assist, and encourage local efforts to preserve the  
3 stories of this pandemic and the ones who lost their battle  
4 to the pandemic.

5 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROJECT AT AMERICAN**  
6 **FOLKLIFE CENTER TO COLLECT VIDEO AND**  
7 **AUDIO RECORDINGS, WRITTEN MATERIALS,**  
8 **AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF INDIVIDUALS AF-**  
9 **FECTED BY COVID-19.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the American  
11 Folklife Center at the Library of Congress shall establish  
12 a history project to be known as the “COVID–19 Amer-  
13 ican History Project” (hereafter referred to as the  
14 “Project”) to—

15 (1) collect video and audio recordings of per-  
16 sonal histories and testimonials of individuals who  
17 contracted COVID–19, individuals who lost family  
18 members to COVID–19, and frontline healthcare  
19 workers who fought to treat the illness;

20 (2) create a collection of the recordings ob-  
21 tained (including a catalog and index) which will be  
22 available for public use through the National Digital  
23 Library of the Library of Congress and such other  
24 methods as the Director considers appropriate, to

1       the extent feasible and subject to available resources;  
2       and

3               (3) solicit, reproduce, and collect written mate-  
4       rials (such as letters and diaries) and photographs  
5       relevant to the personal histories of individuals who  
6       contracted COVID–19, individuals who lost family  
7       members and friends to COVID–19, and frontline  
8       healthcare workers who fought to treat the illness,  
9       and catalog such materials in a manner the Director  
10      considers appropriate, consistent with and com-  
11      plimentary to the efforts described in paragraphs (1)  
12      and (2).

13               (b) USE OF AND CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ENTI-  
14      TIES.—The Director may carry out the activities described  
15      in paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (a) through agree-  
16      ments and partnerships entered into with other govern-  
17      ment and private entities, and may otherwise consult with  
18      interested persons (within the limits of available re-  
19      sources) and develop appropriate guidelines and arrange-  
20      ments for soliciting, acquiring, and making available re-  
21      cordings, written materials, and photographs under the  
22      Project. The recordings, written materials, and photo-  
23      graphs shall be available on the Library of Congress  
24      website and may be used to educate the public on the im-  
25      pacts COVID–19 has on everyday Americans.

1       (c) TIMING.—As soon as practicable after the enact-  
2 ment of this Act, the Director shall begin collecting video  
3 and audio recordings under subsection (a)(1).

4 **SEC. 4. PRIVATE SUPPORT.**

5       (a) ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS.—The Librarian of  
6 Congress may solicit and accept donations of funds and  
7 in-kind contributions to carry out the Project, subject to  
8 subsection (c).

9       (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE GIFT AC-  
10 COUNT.—There is established in the Treasury (among the  
11 accounts of the Library of Congress) a gift account for  
12 the Project.

13       (c) DEDICATION OF FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any  
14 other provision of law—

15           (1) any funds donated to the Librarian of Con-  
16 gress to carry out the Project shall be deposited en-  
17 tirely into the gift account established under sub-  
18 section (b);

19           (2) the funds contained in such account shall be  
20 available only to the extent and in the amounts pro-  
21 vided in advance in appropriations Acts;

22           (3) the funds contained in such account shall be  
23 used solely to carry out the Project; and

24           (4) the Librarian of Congress may not deposit  
25 into such account any funds donated to the Librar-

1       ian which are not donated for the exclusive purpose  
2       of carrying out the Project.

3 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

4       There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
5 this Act—

6                     (1) \$250,000 for fiscal year 2023; and  
7                     (2) such sums as may be necessary for each  
8       succeeding fiscal year, except that no funds are au-  
9       thorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act for  
10      any fiscal year which begins after the expiration of  
11      the 3-year period beginning on the date of the termi-  
12      nation of the declaration of the public health emer-  
13      gency declared by the Secretary of Health and  
14      Human Services pursuant to section 319 of the Pub-  
15      lic Health Service Act on January 31, 2020, entitled  
16      “Determination that a Public Health Emergency  
17      Exists Nationwide as the Result of the 2019 Novel  
18      Coronavirus”.

19 **SEC. 6. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

20       The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of  
21      complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,  
22      shall be determined by reference to the latest statement  
23      titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this  
24      Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record  
25      by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-

1 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the  
2 vote on passage.

Passed the House of Representatives March 29,  
2022.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,  
*Clerk.*